

Porter County Recycling District: First Master Recycler Certified

James Biancotti became the first certified Master Recycler in Porter County. Recycling and Waste Reduction District of Porter County executive director, Therese Davis, presented Biancotti with his certification at the organization's quarterly board meeting in July 2014.

The Ogden Dunes resident completed the last few volunteer hours of his required 30 Payback Hours helping out at the district's household hazardous waste event. He fulfilled his attendance at the Master Recycler pilot classes in the spring of 2014.

The Master Recycler program offered by the district provides a comprehensive overview of the organization, waste flow, recycling processes and household hazardous waste in Northwest Indiana: composting, vermicomposting, and electronics recycling. The classes feature guest speakers and field trips so attendees can learn from industry professionals and witness first-hand what happens to their waste.

"I originally took the class to find out what could be done to increase the amount of recycled material from the town of Ogden Dunes," Biancotti said. "I am a member of the town environmental advisory board. I learned a lot more about recycling than expected: the right and wrong of single stream recycling, how to handle e-waste, why everyone should utilize the household hazardous waste collection days, and the recycling of organic waste."

He said the field trips to the materials recovery facility and the Newton County landfill were eye openers on what is going on in the real world. "My work background included recycling for a major industry," said Biancotti. The U.S. Steel retiree spent 15 years in several environmental manager positions. "My experience has resulted in a continued interest in recycling," he said. "I'm interested in looking into changes and hopefully improvements in recycling since I have left the environmental field and see how these can be applied to the town of Ogden Dunes."

Some ways Biancotti spent his volunteer hours included helping his town with its collection and cleanup event and assisting with waste reduction at the town's Memorial Day special event. He also assisted at district collection events where he helped to educate individuals and staffed the district table during the Northwest Indiana Earth Day Celebration. He promises that his volunteer time will not end at 30 hours. Biancotti is currently developing an outlet for film plastic generated at the Portage Township Food Pantry. He hopes creating a program will help divert two to four 45-gallon plastic bags filled with film on a weekly basis.

"Now I cannot stand to see a large volume of a recyclable material routinely tossed in the trash," Biancotti said. "I guess the class improved my outlook on reducing the volume of material I have put in landfills."



From left: James Murphy, Kouts Town Council; Karen Conover, County Council; Nancy Adams, County Commissioner; Sue Lynch, Portage City Council; James Biancotti, Certified Master Recycler; Therese Davis, District Executive Director; and James Snyder, Mayor of Portage.



This is the class photo of all interns that completed the Master Recycler coursework.

Front from left: Patricia Jackson, Chesterton; Thomas Murphy, Valparaiso; Kathy Sipple, Valparaiso; Robert Wichlinski, Boone Grove; James Bartos, Portage.

Second row: Donna Stuckert, district staff; Sue Lynch, City of Portage Council; Gayle Tokarz of Hebron, President; Susan Klett of Valparaiso, District board chair; Nancy Adams, Porter County Commissioner; Jennie Girton of Valparaiso, District board member; Ken Taylor of Hebron, District board chair.

Back row: Russ Boelcke of Chesterton; James Biancotti of Ogden Dunes; Jane Biuckie of Valparaiso; Randy Overbey of Valparaiso; Robert Klett of Valparaiso; Mary Koselke of Valparaiso; Gloria Potter of Valparaiso; District Executive Director Therese Davis.

“We are very proud of our first class of Master Recycler interns,” said Donna Stuckert, public education coordinator. “They took the initiative to want to learn more through the classes, and now each one is helping the environment in Porter County by identifying ways they can educate and make a difference.”

Director Stuckert added that education will be key in meeting the state’s new recycling goals.

The course offered in Porter County is the first Master Recycler program offered anywhere in the state of Indiana. Biancotti is the very first certified Master Recycler not only in the county, but anywhere in the state. Master Recycler programs are popular in areas of the Pacific Northwest, but a few are also located in Minnesota, Virginia, Ohio, Arizona and Canada. Biancotti was one of 17 individuals in Porter County who took the initiative to

register for the course and commit to volunteering time to help educate and reduce waste in Porter County.

The next course was scheduled in September 2014 for eight weeks. Online registration is available on www.ItMeansTheWorld.org. Master Recyclers are available to assist with education or waste reduction programs. For more information, call 219-465-3819.